
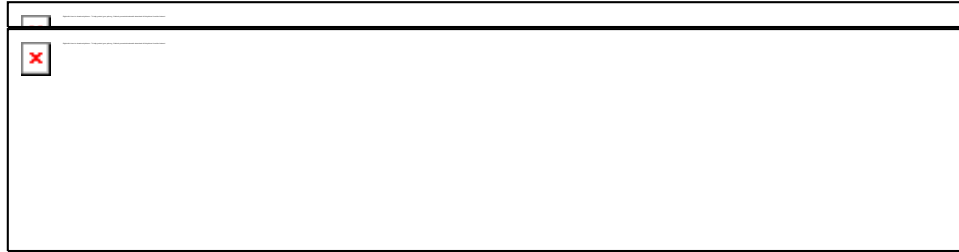


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To: Coleman, Sam
Subject: Obama, McConnell gird for fight over energy and climate

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 Energy and environment headlines for the afternoon of Wednesday,
November 5, 2014



Obama, McConnell gird for fight over energy and climate

By Edward Felker

Approval of the long-delayed Keystone XL pipeline and spending language to shut down carbon regulations will be among bills the new Republican majority will send to President Barack Obama next year, Sen. Mitch McConnell said Wednesday, in a move to fulfill two top campaign promises.

Obama sidestepped the threat of the Keystone bill getting to his desk, however. Asked at a news conference if he would veto an approval bill, Obama said only that he won't intervene in the ongoing State Department review of TransCanada's permit application.

"There's an independent process, it's moving forward, and I'm going to let that process play out," Obama said in Washington. "I'm just going to gather up the facts."

The exchange mapped out one of the initial areas of conflict between Obama and McConnell, just hours after Republicans

seized control of the Senate in the mid-term elections and put the Kentucky Republican in line to become majority leader.

In back-to-back press conferences, both men sought to highlight areas of potential cooperation in the coming two years now that Republicans control both sides of Capitol Hill. McConnell pointed to tax reform, while Obama stressed infrastructure spending and early childhood education.

Agreement didn't extend to the \$8 billion Keystone XL project and climate change policy, however. McConnell said the pipeline would be among energy legislation he will bring up to advance the U.S. oil and gas boom.

"We will certainly be voting on things as well that the (Obama) administration is not fond of. They seem to have had no interest for example in doing anything serious on the energy front. We haven't had an energy bill in seven years," McConnell told reporters in Louisville.

"When you say energy these days people think of the Keystone pipeline, but that's only part of it. We need to embrace the energy revolution that's going on in our country, promote it, (it's) hugely advantageous to America, not only in the area of energy independence but employment," he added.

The appropriations process will offer the opportunity for Republicans to push back against the Environmental Protection Agency's planned carbon emissions regulations on power plants, McConnell said.

"I think it's reasonable to assume that we will use the power of the purse to try to push back against this overactive bureaucracy, and of course we have a huge example of that here in this state with the war on coal, not authorized by Congress."

Obama said he will evaluate the Keystone project based on a number of factors, including its impact on carbon emissions, and impacts, if any, on gasoline prices and on jobs. He also pointed to the pending court case in Nebraska over the siting of the line through the state.

The president noted that the project will benefit Canada at a time of surging U.S. oil production and growing renewable energy development.

"Keystone, I just consider as one small aspect of a broader trend that's really positive for the American people," he said.

TransCanada's president Russ Girling on Wednesday called on Congress to approve the project.

"After six years, it is time to break the gridlock on Keystone and move forward," he said in a statement.



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Texas energy group asks court to halt fracking ban

By Emily Schmall

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) — A North Texas city that sits atop a natural gas reserve is preparing for an extended court battle after voters made it the first in the state to ban further hydraulic fracturing — a fight that cities nationwide considering similar laws will likely be watching closely.

An industry group and the state's little-known but powerful General Land Office responded quickly to the measure Denton approved Tuesday night, seeking an injunction in District Court to stop it from being enforced.

Battling the fracking ban will be Texas Land Commissioner-elect George P. Bush's first fight. The founding manager of an energy and infrastructure consultancy, Bush promoted the economic benefits of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, throughout his campaign.

The ban could have a domino effect in Texas, threatening an "energy renaissance" in shale resources accessed with the drilling technique, said David Porter, a commissioner on the Texas Railroad Commission, the state's oil and gas regulator.

Scores of cities in other states have considered similar bans over health and environmental concerns. Measures aimed at restricting fracking passed Tuesday in Athens, Ohio, and California's San Benito and Mendocino Counties, but failed elsewhere in those states.

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Begich trailing in Alaska Senate race

By Becky Bohrer

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Alaska Democratic Sen. Mark Begich wasn't conceding anything Wednesday in his race against Republican challenger Dan Sullivan.

Sullivan held a 3.6 percentage point lead over Begich with all precincts reporting. Thousands of absentee ballots won't be counted until Nov. 11.

In a statement Wednesday, Begich campaign manager Susanne Fleek-Green said the campaign wants a final vote count. Republicans said they believe the margin is insurmountable.

Both sides expressed confidence in the waning days of the campaign, with Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, a tea party favorite, and former presidential candidate Mitt Romney rallying support for Sullivan. Begich, meanwhile, deployed his "big guns" — his wife and mom — to outlying communities to support get-out-the-vote efforts as he shook as many hands as possible.

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\$13B in state/local conservation measures pass

By The Associated Press

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Election Day was not just about the Republican landslide: Voters in states and counties across the nation supported about \$13 billion in conservation funding.

That amount was a record for money approved at the ballot box on Tuesday, according to the Trust for Public Land, which has been tracking such environmental initiatives for more than 25 years.

Florida voters passed the most funding by supporting a constitutional amendment that earmarks about \$9 billion for land purchases. Voters also ponied up cash for land and watershed conservation, parks and open spaces in California, New Jersey and Missoula, Montana.

Pollsters say conservation is an issue that is often supported across partisan lines.

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OPEC shaken by Saudi price move

By George Jahn

VIENNA (AP) — Saudi Arabia showed little concern for fellow OPEC members by unilaterally cutting its oil prices to the U.S. this week, a move that casts doubts on the cartel's credibility and its ability to find a common plan to stabilize the slumping energy market.

And while OPEC struggles to find consensus, oil prices risk remaining low — or falling further — to the benefit of consumers and businesses in the U.S. and worldwide.

OPEC is already riven by differences among its members on what the ideal price level should be. That is exemplified in the rivalry between heavyweights Saudi Arabia, which can withstand lower prices, and Iran, which relies on a stronger market to remain profitable.

The Saudis' unexpected move on Monday to cut prices to the U.S., aimed at protecting their market share there, will exacerbate those conflicts — weighing on the market and hurting most other OPEC members economically.

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High court sympathy for beleaguered fisherman

By Sam Hananel

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Wednesday appeared sympathetic to a Florida fisherman who says the government went overboard in prosecuting him for throwing undersized grouper off his boat.

But the justices seemed to struggle over how to limit the reach of a law meant to tackle corporate fraud in the wake of the Enron accounting scandal — not to dole out punishment over some discarded fish.

The court heard arguments in the case of John Yates, a fishing boat captain who claims he was wrongly convicted of destroying evidence — namely, the fish — that were under the legal minimum catch size in the Gulf of Mexico.

Critics have derided the case as a prime example of government overreach. The Obama administration says it is simply enforcing the plain language of a law that prohibits destruction of "any tangible object" during an investigation.

Justice Antonin Scalia said he was stunned at the very idea that the government decided to prosecute Yates under a statute that could bring up to 20 years in prison.

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Brazil: Rich nations must reduce carbon emissions

By Brad Brooks

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil's environment minister said Wednesday that her nation will be a protagonist at an upcoming climate change conference in Peru and will hold developed nations accountable for strong commitments to reduce carbon emissions.

Minister Izabella Teixeira said she wants developed nations like the United States to detail their plans to reduce carbon emissions at the next round of global negotiations set to take place next month in Lima, Peru.

Teixeira spoke to The Associated Press on the sidelines of a Climate Reality Leadership Corps Training session in Rio de Janeiro, led by former U.S. Vice President Al Gore. She said the Peru summit is essential for creating the roadmap for a global agreement to reduce emissions that will be negotiated at a Paris climate summit next year.

"We want (developed) nations to make promises for strategic reductions of emissions — that is what we're looking for in Lima," Teixeira said. "What's their plan?"

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French police arrest 3 men with drone near nuke site

By The Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Three men in their 20s have been arrested in possession of a drone near a French nuclear reactor, the first such arrests since a spate of mysterious drone overflights of reactors began in early October.

There have been at least 15 sightings of drones over nuclear reactors around France, raising security concerns in a country heavily dependent on atomic energy for electricity. The zone around nuclear plants is off limits.

The National Gendarmerie said the men were being questioned after being found with a drone Wednesday afternoon near the Belleville-sur-Loire reactor in the Cher region south of Paris.

It didn't immediately provide more details.

The drones — unmanned aircraft — that overflowed nuclear plants ranged from very small to one spanning two meters (six feet).

US, France cite concerns about Iran nuclear talks

By Lara Jakes

PARIS (AP) — With time running out on the latest round of negotiations, France and the United States on Wednesday stepped up demands for Iran to prove that its nuclear program is peaceful — or risk scuttling the closest chance for a deal in years and losing a chance to ease crippling sanctions on Tehran's economy.

The entreaty to Tehran comes days before Secretary of State John Kerry is to meet with top diplomats to Iran and the European Union on how to break the years-long deadlock before a Nov. 24 deadline.

At issue is Iran's demand to generate nuclear power for energy, medical and other benign purposes for its people. But much of the rest of the world fears that Tehran — which has hindered fully transparent inspections of its reactors over the years — wants to build an atomic weapon.

"They have a right to a peaceful program but not a track to a bomb," Kerry said after meeting with French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. "We believe it is pretty easy to prove to the world that a plan is peaceful."

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Malfunction closes 2 Czech nuclear reactors

By The Associated Press

PRAGUE (AP) — An official says a damaged water pipe has forced the closure of two of the four nuclear reactors at a Czech power plant.

Petr Spilka, a spokesman for the Dukovany plant, says the decision poses no safety threat.

He said the problem arose Monday on one of the three pipes used for cooling the plant's technical and security systems.

He said Wednesday that authorities decided to shut down two nuclear reactors because it was not able to fix the problem in three days, a requirement of safety regulations. The two remaining reactors at the plant have not been affected.

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NERC pushes delay in carbon rule over reliability worries

The North American Electric Reliability Corp. is urging the Environmental Protection Agency to put off implementing its rule limiting carbon emissions from existing power plants because it doesn't provide enough time to replace coal-fired generation that would be forced offline, Bloomberg reports.

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GOP candidates win slots on Arizona board that regulates utilities

Republicans Tom Forese and Doug Little won seats on the Arizona Corporation Commission in Tuesday's election after getting backing from \$3.2 million in political advertising, The Arizona Republic reports.

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Oil higher on Middle East reports, stockpile numbers

Oil climbed Wednesday as on early reports of a pipeline fire in Saudi Arabia -- although it apparently carried diesel -- and word that output had stopped at a Libyan oilfield, as well as data showing a smaller-than-expected gain in Cushing stockpiles. West Texas Intermediate crude for December delivery increased \$1.49 to settle at \$78.68 a barrel on the Nymex, while in London Brent inched up just 13 cents to \$82.95, Bloomberg reports.

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Move by armed group shuts Libyan oil field

El Sharara oil field in Libya -- which had been generating some 200,000 barrels a day -- was producing nothing Wednesday after

an armed group seized it, trapping workers inside buildings, Reuters reports.

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Abengoa to go it alone on Palen solar

Abengoa Solar says it has bought out BrightSource Energy's stake in the controversial Palen solar project and intends to move forward on it, although the company says it has made some configuration changes, and will likely need to receive new approvals from regulators, The Desert Sun reports.

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Texas tops in generating oil field jobs

Texas produced 19,000 new oil and gas production jobs last year, more than any other state, according to [data](#) released by the Energy Information Administration Wednesday, FuelFix reports.

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NRG increases 3Q earnings but lowers projections on cool summer

NRG Energy has reported a gain in third quarter earnings to \$168 million, although a cool summer has caused the company to cut its annual projection by 5 percent, FuelFix reports, noting that executives in a conference call expressed high hopes for NRG's home solar business.

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No swift Oncor auction for Energy Future

The ruling this week from U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Christopher Sontchi forcing Energy Future Holdings to negotiate with creditor committees over the timing of its auction of power company Oncor is likely to further delay the process, The Dallas Morning News reports.

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Dominion makes another request for FERC review start

Days after Dominion Resources announced it had requested the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission start review of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline it is proposing to bring natural gas to the Southeast, the company said it had also started the ball rolling to get approval to connect its transmission facilities to the pipeline, The Associated Press reports.

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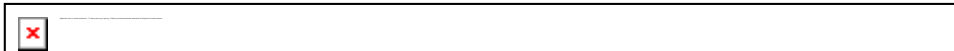
GE purchase of Alstom energy unit wins French nod

General Electric's purchase of Alstom's energy business for \$13.5 billion got official approval from the French government Wednesday, The New York Times reports.

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Upcoming Events

- Nov. 5, Washington: Environmental groups forum to discuss the mid-term election results. Representatives of EDF Action, League of Conservation Voters, NRDC Action Fund, Sierra Club to speak. 1:30 pm , National Press Club.
- Nov. 5, Washington: Brookings Institution forum, "Obama in China: Preserving the Rebalance." Includes panel on U.S.-China environment and climate change cooperation. 9:00 am , 1775 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.



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